

## TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN THE GREEN ECONOMY SYMPOSIUM CONCLUSIONS

*The Travel and Tourism in the Green Economy Symposium, held in Gothenburg, Sweden on 14 - 15 September 2009 was jointly organised by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), the European Travel Commission (ETC) and VisitSweden, and supported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Swedish Government who held the EU Presidency at the time. The following conclusions are presented as a contribution to the Davos process on Climate Change and Tourism and to the UN Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which will be held from 7 - 18 December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark.*

### **Key Points**

1. From Agenda 21 to Copenhagen - The Davos Declaration and the Seal the Deal campaign provide global guidance
2. Develop Sustainable Tourism and travel supply chain activities in the context of the global green economy
3. Develop Sustainable Destinations in the framework of a globally certified green tourism market place
4. Make the best use of life-long learning, knowledge networking and Information & Communications Technologies (ICT)
5. National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) and National Tourism Administrations (NTAs) should follow up on global and European policy lines, programmes and networking processes

### **Report from participants as a contribution to the Copenhagen Process**

The Gothenburg Symposium on Tourism and Travel in the Green Economy<sup>1</sup> has taken place against a complex global backdrop of multiple socio-economic and environmental crises that have had devastating effects on the lives of millions of the poorest on the planet, and impacted the functionality of richer nations<sup>2</sup>. The timing of the Symposium allows tourism stakeholders to contribute to the UN Copenhagen Agreement on Climate Change process (COP 15) taking place in December 2009<sup>3</sup>, a process aiming to agree on an ambitious climate change deal to follow on the first phase of the UN's Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. This report aims at conveying the conclusions and the perspectives of the large group of international, public and private tourism stakeholders who gathered in Gothenburg. The Copenhagen Agreement will establish an emissions-regulated worldwide framework for energy production and consumption that will directly affect tourism stakeholders. A fair, effective and comprehensive global climate deal in Copenhagen can jumpstart a fundamental transformation of the global economy, including development of the tourism industry, strengthening climate resilient development and assisting adaptation to the inevitable impacts of climate change.

### **From Agenda 21 to Copenhagen - The Davos Declaration and the Seal the Deal campaign**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.etc-corporate.org/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=218&ac=12>

<sup>2</sup> Global Green New Deal: Policy brief p1

<sup>3</sup> <http://en.cop15.dk/>

Recalling the UN *Millennium Goals* and the *World Summit on Sustainable Development's Plan of Implementation*<sup>4</sup>, and particularly the 10 year framework of programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), as well as the *European Sustainable Development Strategy*<sup>5</sup> which expresses these global processes at the European level, stakeholders are reminded of the overarching Agenda 21 global responses to both climate change and the social transformation problematic, a response framework that provides critical guidance for the sustainable development of the tourism sector.

With the backing of its specialized agencies and programmes and, under the leadership of UNEP, the United Nations have launched a *Green Economy Initiative (GEI)* which aims at reviving the global economy and boosting employment, while simultaneously accelerating the fight against climate change, environmental degradation and poverty. The UNWTO *Davos Declaration* process<sup>6</sup> on Climate Change and Tourism and "*The Roadmap for Recovery*"<sup>7</sup> were also developed to assist the sector in its engagement in the green economy, including: the *Global Green New Deal*<sup>8</sup> the *Seal the Deal Campaign*<sup>9</sup> (Cool Planet 2009 in Europe<sup>10</sup>) and other green initiatives. Considering the importance of the tourism sector in Europe and to many developing countries, the GEI will dedicate a special chapter in the GEI report to assess how investment in sustainable tourism solutions can contribute to the sustainable development of the sector and the transformation to the Green Economy at national and global levels.

These processes provide the leading policy lines and guidance for dealing with climate change and sustainable tourism development, and therefore this report endorses and reiterates the *Davos* message, asking tourism stakeholders to contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation measures by:

- reducing their **greenhouse gas emissions** (GHG), derived especially from transport and accommodation activities;
- applying existing and **new technologies** to improve energy efficiency; and
- securing **financial resources** to help poor regions and countries achieve these objectives;
- adapting **tourism businesses** and **destinations** to changing climate conditions.

With climate change and social transformation as the driver of sustainable development, this report reminds stakeholders in the sector to immediately undertake steps to realise these four key points within the broader sustainable development agenda.

To this end the *International Task Force on Sustainable Tourism* constituted within the '*Marrakech process*'<sup>11</sup> is also recognised as playing a leading role at the global as well as at sub-global, national and regional levels to ensure that the tourism sector is taken fully into account in the development of sustainable consumption and production plans.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.un.org/events/wssd/>

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/sustainable/sds2006/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/sustainable/sds2006/index_en.htm)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.unwto.org/pdf/pr071046.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://climate-l.org/2009/08/06/event-announcement-2009-ministers%E2%80%99-summit-roadmap-for-recovery-%E2%80%93-sustainable-tourism-in-challenging-times/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sealthedeal2009.org/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.coolplanet2009.org/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/tfsustourism.shtml>

With regard to European tourism stakeholders, it has been recognised that the European Union and its member states are developing sustainable consumption and production programmes, and there are many national and regional examples of green economic development that - when added to UN initiatives - can already provide part of a global-to-local tapestry of the green global economy. **Sustainable tourism and travel supply chain activities in the global green economy**

The Symposium further welcomes the travel and tourism business stakeholders' steps towards a low carbon economy through the mitigation and adaptation of carbon emissions and other GHG gases as conveyed in the WTTC report *Leading the Challenge on Climate Change*<sup>12</sup>. The report identifies an aspired target of 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2035 over 2005 levels, with an interim target of 30% by 2020 - assuming there is an international agreement - or 25% by the same year in the absence of such an agreement. The Symposium supports these targets as minimum requirements for progress on effective emissions reductions, whilst recognising that fully carbon neutral development should be developed by all tourism stakeholders within the tourism supply chain with appropriate regulatory, voluntary and support measures in place.

The Gothenburg report supports the view that, if there is going to be large-scale government spending and taxation in response to the current crises, then the tourism sector should be involved in the strategic thinking and allocation plans for the application of recovery funds. As well as stimulating sustainable growth in the tourism sector directly, the opportunity to use the sector as part of a wider package of sustainable development solutions should also be explored. In both cases the development of a global green economy provides a common vision for stakeholders from all sectors to collectively view the problems we face and then contribute with appropriate actions that will work in harmony and synergy with other stakeholder problem-solving initiatives.

The global green economy can be viewed as a means to ensure the sustainability of all sectors. No single sector solution will lead to sustainability. In such sustainable consumption and production processes, the tourism sector should therefore be considered as a key contributor to a green economy approach that promotes economic recovery and also assists the poorer countries in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and greening their economies. By participating in the development of the green economy, tourism can play a positive catalytic cross-sectoral role to improve the sustainability of several related sectors such as agriculture, energy, transport and construction, as well as contributing to its own sustainable sectoral development.

The Symposium discussions have looked at the type of tourism supply chain that is needed in the global green economy that would meet policy aims and targets, focusing on air and rail travel and the accommodation sector. Transport initiatives to reduce the environmental impacts of air travel and improve the contribution of rail networks have been launched to improve the environmental footprint of the sub-sectors. Similarly, the UNWTO's *Hotel Energy Solutions*<sup>13</sup> initiative represents a further sub-sector move towards sustainability from accommodation stakeholders<sup>14</sup>, and UNEP publication '*Sowing the Seeds of Change, Integrating environmental practices in small and medium hotels*', represent a further step towards sustainability from accommodation

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.wttc.org/bin/pdf/original\\_pdf\\_file/climate\\_change\\_final.pdf](http://www.wttc.org/bin/pdf/original_pdf_file/climate_change_final.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.hotelenergysolutions.net/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.hotelenergysolutions.net/>

stakeholders. The Symposium report welcomes further elaboration of these initiatives in the forthcoming UNWTO/UNEP report on the tourism sector in the green economy, as well as the European Commission's DG Enterprise's development of a series of environmental impact indicators for the sector.

### **Sustainable destinations in a globally certified green market place**

Sustainable development of tourism destinations was also discussed at the Symposium. Four major building blocks for an environmentally sustainable tourism destination were identified - (i) reducing carbon emissions, (ii) waste management, (iii) sustainable water management and (iv) biodiversity conservation. Integrated territorial land-use management is essential to the planning and implementation of actions to improve the sustainability of tourism destinations. The Symposium concluded that it is not enough to fix some smaller issues or attempt to 'greenwash' business-as-usual. In each destination a key strategic programme for these four aspects within a global sustainability plan needs to be defined under the leadership of a local, regional or national public authority.

Greening should not be viewed as a marketing campaign, but as a serious effort to become a truly environmentally and socially sustainable destination. The Symposium endorses the efforts to develop the *Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria*<sup>15</sup> and the creation of a Tourism Sustainability Council, and recommends that tourism stakeholders support this move towards a global harmonisation of sustainability criteria for the tourism sector. This is particularly true when bringing regional and national certified products and services to the global green marketplace.

### **Making the best use of life-long learning, knowledge networking and ICT**

The use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) has become critical to the day-to-day operation of the sector. ICT security and development is essential to the sustainability of the sector, yet appears fragile in times of natural or human crises. Global investment in ICT infrastructure, especially for developing countries and rural areas, is a prerequisite of modern sustainable development. This infrastructure should provide an equitable technological platform for knowledge networking between global tourism stakeholders, especially with the poorest tourism stakeholders and Millennium Goals in mind.

The implementation of a global green economy is intimately tied to the creation of the global knowledge economy. In order to realise all of the above policies and programmes, all tourism stakeholders should have ICT access to life-long learning processes that continuously improve their personal education and skills, with particular reference to knowledge about green consumption and production. NTOs and NTAs should invest in retraining and reorienting staff.

A networking tool for sustainable development knowledge has been made available via The European Environment Agency's *DestiNet Sustainable Tourism Information and*

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org/>

*Communications Portal*<sup>16</sup>, which further offers tourism stakeholders a global, quality-assessed green market place that can map the development of the global green economy.

### **NTO follow up on global and European policy lines, programmes and networking processes**

With UNWTO joining the UNEP initiative on the Green Economy on behalf of the tourism sector, other international entities and national administrative bodies should be encouraged to develop greater coherence between economic and environmental departments. NTOs and NTAs need to be supported by their national departmental counterparts who deal with the implementation of SCP in general and environmental issues in particular, and, who can, in turn, support tourism sector environmental and economic initiatives where appropriate. Therefore, it is recommended that the Symposium report reaches those national-level stakeholders who would be interested in developing this collaborative approach.

The good governance of the sector cannot be omitted from any sustainable development strategies and corporate and government administrators should be encouraged to learn about and adopt the value systems of sustainable development as expressed in the UNWTO *Global Code of Ethics*<sup>17</sup> and the EU's *Better Regulation*<sup>18</sup> and *Impact Assessment*<sup>19</sup> procedures. Above all, both consumer and corporate social and environmental responsibility must be encouraged throughout the tourism supply chain, by both voluntary and regulatory means.

This report encourages all stakeholders to use existing collaboration processes in order to work even more closely together to forge a common vision of the global green economy within the UNFCCC process, both before and after Copenhagen. In cooperation with others, tourism stakeholders can then compose their own time-tabled plans and programmes for tourism sector sustainable development.

In conclusion, UNWTO, ETC and their partners invite European NTOs to support the above policies and to follow up those programmes that contribute towards the development of the global green economy. This Gothenburg Symposium report encourages all tourism stakeholders to use any opportunity available to contribute input to the Copenhagen talks, to the *Seal the Deal* campaign and to the EU's *Road to Copenhagen* initiative.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://destinet.ew.eea.europa.eu/>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.world-tourism.org/code\\_ethics/eng.html](http://www.world-tourism.org/code_ethics/eng.html)

<sup>18</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/governance/better\\_regulation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/governance/better_regulation/index_en.htm)

<sup>19</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/index_en.htm)